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cc. for Mr. [unclear]
[unclear]

1-1862

12 August 1954

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Chief, WH Division

SUBJECT: Congressman Kersten and the Committee on
Communist Aggression.

1. At a meeting in the Director's office yesterday, Congressman Kersten, after expressing appreciation for the assistance and cooperation of the Agency with his Committee during the recently-concluded hearings in Germany, proposed to us certain additional cooperation in other fields. (Portions of this proposal not applicable to Latin America will be dealt with in a separate memorandum.) I inquired of Congressman Kersten whether his Committee intended to follow up on its interest in Central America, stating that we had read in the press and heard in other ways that at the conclusion of the European inquiry the Committee proposed to turn its attention to Central America. Congressman Kersten replied generally to the effect that they might well wish to go into the matter of the Communist menace in Central America and perhaps South America. At this point, with the Director's approval and concurrence, I said that we would like to be kept informed about their plans since we might be able to provide them with some useful guidance and other forms of assistance. Congressman Kersten expressed interest and appreciation.

2. I then said that we had a number of documents which we had obtained in Guatemala following the downfall of the Communist-dominated Arbenz regime, and that we would be glad to make some of these available to him if he was interested. I explained that the documents revealed quite clearly the nature and extent of Communist penetration in Guatemala and that they provided very interesting reading for anyone who was knowledgeable on the subject. Congressman Kersten welcomed this offer and requested me to call upon him the following morning, which I did. I provided to Congressman Kersten two declassified copies of the brochure, which contains about 23 documents, together with a brief covering (blind) memorandum explaining something about the documents. I also showed Congressman Kersten a representative collection of the photographs which we had received and said that we could provide these to him if he and his Committee were interested. Congressman Kersten, after examining the material, said that he would like to have us send to him as soon as possible a collection of the atrocity pictures and one or two others such as the photograph of the labor headquarters with the Red flag flying, etc. -- together with a brief description of each. [I don't know whether we own some of the most striking atrocity pictures, since someone told me that these had been offered to us for purchase. This point should be clarified with [redacted]]

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- 2 -

before we actually release the photographs for possible publication. You may have to have copies made of these photographs if we do not have the negatives and this should be done quickly since Congressman Kersten would like to have them by the end of the week. Moreover, he would like to receive from us additional documents as we get them from time to time in the future and will you please take care of this -- on a selective basis, of course.

3. Congressman Kersten requested my advice as to what use he and his Committee might make of this documentary material. I replied that I could not advise him on that subject since I did not know enough about the interests and charter of his Committee. However, if I understood it correctly, -- that his Committee planned to interest itself in the subject of Communist infiltration of Latin America and to build a case about it for the benefit of the US and world public opinion -- he could regard the materials which we were providing to him as "bricks and mortar" for the edifice he would construct. I also emphasized the point that these materials and others we could get for him might save him and the Committee a lot of time and effort.

4. Congressman Kersten then told me of a story which had been related to him by a nun in Germany or France, which was to the effect that in Guatemala following the downfall of the Arbenz regime, there had been discovered in one of the torture-chambers or jails where anti-Communists had been imprisoned and tortured an entire bucketful of human eyes. He wanted to know whether we could corroborate this story, and I said that we would put a question to the field in an effort to do so. Will you please take care of this?

5. Congressman Kersten called me this afternoon on the telephone and said that he had been giving further study to the documents and was quite interested in them. He said that he would like to have our permission to use them in connection with a speech he proposes to make in Wisconsin on or about Sunday, the 15th, which will be attended by a representative number of middle Western business men. The press will also probably be present. I told Congressman Kersten that we had provided the documents to him for such purposes as he wished to put them to and that it was all right as far as we were concerned for him to use the documents and even to display some of the pictures which we would try to get to him before he departs for the middle West. However, I said I wanted him to understand that we had heard that there might be some publicity concerning these documents in Guatemala on or about the 15th and that he should bear this in mind and not be surprised. He said that this did not trouble him at all and that, on the contrary, he felt it might be useful to take the wrappings off this particular part of the story in two places at about the same time -- his thought

- 3 -

being that the double publicity would be mutually supporting. I had previously explained to Congressman Kersten that we had provided copies of the documents to the State Department, to Ambassador Cabot Lodge at the United Nations, and to [redacted] because of the bad treatment of the Guatemalan situation in the [redacted] press and [redacted] Congressman Kersten said that he thought this was wise for us to have made this dissemination.

(Signed) FRANK G. WISNER

FRANK G. WISNER
Deputy Director (Plans)

cc: AC/PP for info.